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KOSSUTH OR WASHINGTON?



THE NEW DOCTRINE

OF

INTERVENTION,

TRIED BY THE

TEACHINGS OF WASHINGTON:

A N A D D R E S S

DELIVERED IN THE

TENTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,

ON MONDAY AND TUESDAY EVENINGS, THE 23D AND 24TH OF
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BY

Henry A. BOARDMAN, D. D.
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A D D R E S S.

IN a discourse on the "TRUE MISSION OF THE UNITED STATES IN RESPECT TO THE NATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS OF EUROPE," delivered in this house, on the last Thanksgiving Day, there occurred the following passage:—

"Various indications show that a concerted effort is about to be made to break down the principle of non-intervention, which has hitherto been fundamental to our foreign policy, and to involve us actively in the conflicts of Europe. Under these circumstances, it becomes a grave question with every citizen: 'Is this plan, or the other which has been sketched, the true way to discharge our duty to the old world? Are we to send fleets and armies there (for this is the English of it), or are we to TAKE CARE OF THIS UNION?' In so far as this may be a legitimate topic for the pulpit, I could wish that my strength and your patience were equal to a brief discussion of it. I must, however, waive it with the citation of one or two of those solemn and monitory sentences which Washington devotes to the subject in his Farewell Address."

The sermon from which this paragraph is quoted, was preached nearly a fortnight before the *arrival of the Humboldt* in December. The course of events since that steamer landed the great Hungarian at Staten Island, is familiar to all who hear me. If it had not been such as to verify in an alarming degree the prediction then hazarded, that a vigorous effort was about to be made to revolutionize our foreign policy, the present service would have been dispensed with. It is, indeed, with unfeigned reluctance, and only under a stringent sense of duty, that I now, in the altered circumstances of the country, revert to the subject. That the discussion of it in this place will encounter more or less prejudice, is a thing of course. The common feeling will be, that it is a subject which lies beyond the proper jurisdiction of the pulpit, and the less clergymen have to say about it officially, the better. I should so judge myself, if it were not for two very grave considerations. The first is, that the influence of “the clergy” has already, in a signal manner, been put forth in favor of the movement now in progress. Wherever the Hungarian chief has gone, the ministers of religion have been conspicuous in their attentions to him. Not only youthful preachers, who might be carried away by the ardor of their feelings, but men venerable alike for their years, their learning, and their piety, have vied with the civil authorities in doing him honor. This is not, perhaps, surprising. M. Kossuth came to us as the representative of an interesting people, whose

wrongs had excited a sentiment of indignation in the breasts of all true American citizens. We must have forfeited all title to our own liberties, and to the respect of mankind, if we could have seen Russia pour her barbarous hordes down the Carpathians, and re-impose the Austrian yoke upon the Hungarians, just as they were exulting in their well-earned deliverance, without strong emotion. There was everything, too, in the personal character and history of our guest, to elicit sympathy. No idle spectator of his country's woes, he had vindicated her rights with surpassing eloquence in the senate, guided the helm in the turmoil of her revolution, commanded her armies, shared in her disasters, and, hunted from her soil, secured a shelter from the scaffold only in a Turkish prison. Then, too, he stood before the nation as a Christian who, before whatever audience, proclaimed, with a frankness too rare in our own statesmen, his attachment to the Bible; as a Confessor, who had nobly refused to sacrifice his faith to his personal safety; as a Protestant, the inflexible friend of religious liberty, and one of a gallant race which, after repeatedly rolling back from Europe the devastating torrent of Mohammedanism, was now compelled to see its own ancient and beloved church made the football of Jesuit intolerance and Austrian tyranny.* When with these

* "Scarcely had Russia restored the house of Hapsburg, by putting its foot on the neck of Hungary, when the first act of that house was to spill noble blood by the hands of the hangman, and its second was to destroy the rights of the Protestant religion." (*Kossuth's Speech in*

attributes you combine those rare oratorical powers which elicit equal admiration from the most refined and the most uncultivated auditories, there can be no room for surprise that Kossuth should have received from the Protestant clergy the same cordial greeting which has been extended to him by all other professions.

But he visits us, it must be remembered, on a specific errand. He comes, not as an emigrant, like Uijhazy and others of his friends, to seek a tranquil home here; not simply as an exile, to escape from danger; not mainly as a fallen leader, to obtain needful succors from the benevolent and the patriotic, for his suffering countrymen. He comes (so he has elected to come) on a political mission; as an expounder of international law; to get our government to incorporate in its policy a certain principle he has invented for the relief of oppressed nationalities, the adoption of which would at once change our relations with all the States of Christendom, and alter the whole tone and spirit of our confederation. It is not in this aspect that the clergy have regarded him. They have not, ordinarily, made this subject prominent in their complimentary addresses to him. But the moral effect has been to stamp their imprimatur upon his favorite project. His answers to them show that this is the impression produced upon his own

London.) There is reason enough why all the sympathies of the Romish hierarchy in Europe and America should be on the side of Austria.

mind, and there are but too many proofs that the people at large think with him. There can be little doubt that the Protestant ministers of the States he has traversed, are set down by the country as endorsing the grand object of his visit, and that this conviction has contributed essentially to the tolerance it has met with among sober-minded people. Nor will it discredit this belief, that the religious press and the pulpit should have been vigorously employed both in lauding the man and defending his peculiar dogma. All this might be allowed to pass, if it were a question merely of to-day. It is not very probable that even the eloquence of Kossuth will bring about an abandonment of that prudent and advantageous policy which we have followed for three-quarters of a century. But if he fails, other foreigners may hereafter tread in his steps. And whether they should or not, politicians of native growth will take the virus—for everything here runs into party-politics—and this question will reappear in our domestic elections. In this view of the case, it would be extremely unfortunate, if the public men of the country should be left to suppose that the Protestant clergy, as a body, were friendly to the new doctrine of intervention. The consequences could not fail to be disastrous in a high degree. As one of that honorable profession, therefore, I wish to unite with those of my brethren who, as pastors or editors, have already proclaimed their dissent from the new theory. Aware that the opinions of a single individual like myself can be of very

little moment in any direction, I still feel constrained to put on record my earnest protest, both against this theory, and against the manner it is attempted to force it upon the country. I am very far from complaining of what so many of my fathers and brethren have done and are doing; but I must claim the same liberty they have exercised, and resist the scheme which they have virtually sanctioned.

The other ground on which the introduction of this subject into the pulpit may be vindicated, is, that the real question now before the American people, is the question of PEACE or WAR. The *furor* which gathers around the eloquent Magyar, and makes his convocations like a burning prairie, may hide the truth from some eyes; but no one who has his reason in full play, can fail to see that War, with its ensanguined horrors, is following in his train. If this be so, the right of the pulpit to take part in the discussion is not to be gainsaid. Patriotism, piety, humanity, forbid it to be silent. As individuals, we have the same stake in this question with our fellow-citizens; and as ambassadors of the Prince of Peace, we should incur the guilt of a flagrant disloyalty, could we see a course of measures in progress legitimately tending to bring down this great calamity upon the country, without remonstrating against them.

If these views are assented to, there can be no difference of opinion as to the fitness of the theme to the present occasion. Among the munificent gifts of Di-

vine Providence to this Western hemisphere, the name of GEORGE WASHINGTON will be conspicuous to the latest posterity. We owe our present position more, under God, to his instrumentality, than to that of any other individual. His character is part of our best earthly treasure: his teachings, one of our richest legacies. By a faithful adherence to his counsels, we have enjoyed an unexampled degree of prosperity. And there is no more suitable way in which we can manifest our reverence for his memory, and our gratitude to heaven for bestowing him upon us, than by repelling all attempts to pervert his principles and to seduce our government from the wise policy he prescribed to it. Such attempts are now making with a boldness, an energy, and an apparent impression upon masses of the people, which are ominous of evil. They meet us in a form eminently adapted to excite our sympathies and disarm our opposition. A European nation, rising against its oppressors, virtually achieves its independence: a third power, interposing with an overwhelming military force, after shooting and gibbeting thousands of its best citizens, replaces its chains, and consigns it to a still more terrible bondage. The gifted leader of this injured people appears amongst us, and tells the tale of his country's wrongs with a pathos which penetrates the most stoical bosoms. The effect produced by his addresses might almost be compared to that which followed the appeal of Maria Theresa [A. D. 1741] when, a young and beautiful

queen, clad in deep mourning, with the crown of St. Stephen on her head, and girt with his sword, and holding her infant son in her arms, she appeared before the Hungarian Diet, and, after reciting the dangers which threatened her kingdom, threw herself upon her faithful Palatines for protection. The Magyar chivalry were carried by storm. In an instant every sword leaped from its scabbard, and amidst the cry, “*Moriamur pro rege nostro Maria Theresa!*” they swore to assert her rights, and to shed the last drop of their blood in her defence. More than one popular assembly in the United States has been wrought up to a similar pitch of enthusiasm by the solemn and touching oratory of Kossuth. And so just is the cause of his country, and so rare the ability with which he advocates it, that it seems a very thankless office to resist his demands and warn the people against his seductions. But duty loses none of its sacredness by being unwelcome; and we must beware how we put even Hungary before our own glorious UNION, or exchange the visionary speculations of a stranger for the tried wisdom of Washington.

What is it, then, that is asked of us? You shall hear in Kossuth's own words:—

“There is an international law founded upon principles; and one of those principles must be, that every country has the right to dispose of its destinies itself, and that no foreign power can have the right to interfere with its domestic concerns. This principle

has been recognized, and by Russia. But the principle or law must be carried out. Who shall carry it out? The executive power of the international law should be exercised only by a free nation, for no other nation can have the power. Therefore, I claim this aid from the United States. The great principle of international law is the right of every nation to dispose of itself, and the United States should declare their willingness to respect that law, and to make it respected by others." (*Speech in Brooklyn.*)

"These are the great objects for which I seek the support of the United States, to check and not permit Russian interference in Hungary; because, so that Hungary may have an opportunity to organize her strength against Russian despotism and barbarity. This is the reason that I ask the United States to become the executive power to recognize the right of every nation to dispose of itself. This is the only glory which is yet wanting to the list of your glorious stars. The people of the United States having successfully asserted their own independence and freedom, have scarcely any other calling than to become the assertors of freedom equally for other lands; and I confidently hope, that being your condition, that you will not deny me your generous support in carrying out that great principle of non-interference, and also of not allowing any interference in that new struggle of Hungary for freedom and independence, which is already felt in the air, and which is pointed out by the

finger of God himself." (*Address to the Military of New York.*)

We are asked, then, to do two things. To declare it as a principle of international law, that no nation shall interfere in the domestic concerns of another nation, and to constitute ourselves THE EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY FOR ENFORCING THIS LAW all over the globe. We are to "make this law respected by other nations." We are to "check and *not permit* Russian interference in Hungary." We are to regard the interference of one nation with the internal affairs of another *as a legitimate cause of war*, and, if nothing short will answer, we are to unsheathe the sword to prevent it.

It cannot be laid to the charge of the American government or people, that they have ever been indifferent to the progress of liberty in other lands. We have watched the great conflict with which Europe is perpetually agitated, between prerogative and popular rights, with intense solicitude. Wherever a nation has revolted against its taskmasters, we have cheered them by our sympathy, and instructed them by our example. We have not ceased to protest against the monstrous dogmas of absolutism, that the plenitude of authority and right is vested in the crown, that society derives all its franchises from the good-will of the sovereign, and that the *people* have nothing to do with government but submit to its decrees, and gratefully accept such favors as may be conceded to them. Our abhorrence of these principles has been expressed, not

merely by our entire periodical press,* and in the primary assemblies of the people, but in our gravest state papers, not excluding the annual "Messages" of the Presidents, and in the solemn enactments of our federal legislature. The despots of the world well know, and the friends of freedom in all lands know, where we stand. Our "line is gone out through all the earth, and our words unto the end of the world." Never, until we shall have sunk so low in virtue and patriotism as to be fit only for a servile yoke ourselves, can we cease to desire, and in all prudent and legitimate methods, to promote the progress of rational liberty throughout the earth.

It is precisely on this ground, that the Utopian doctrine of "intervention to prevent intervention," which now solicits our sanction, is to be condemned. It is because the recognition of it by the government of the United States would be most disastrous to the cause of liberty and enlightened progress both at home and abroad. Because it would throw the influence of this nation, hitherto the beneficent guardian of peace and happiness among the nations, into the scale of merciless and insatiable war.

I have stigmatized the doctrine as "Utopian." This is characterizing it by too mild a term. We are called upon to interpolate in the law of nations, at the point of the bayonet, if it can be done by no milder process, the provision, that, whenever one nation forcibly inter-

* Some of the Romish journals excepted.

feres in the domestic concerns of another, this shall be deemed by other nations a justifiable cause of war, and they shall accordingly take up arms against the offending state. “Interpolated” it must be, and that “at the point of the bayonet,” if this dictum is to be incorporated in the international code. It will be time enough to talk of elevating it to this high dignity, when a single leading cabinet can be found which has not “intervened” in the affairs of other nations. To speak of what the great continental powers have done and are constantly doing in this line, would be superfluous. We are more concerned to know how England stands affected towards the rule, since it is proposed, or rather was proposed, when Kossuth was there, to associate her with ourselves in carrying it into effect. One of her own prominent journals shall supply us with the requisite information:—

“The English ought to know something about intervention, for they have had some experience of it, and are paying dear for that experience. We interfered in behalf of royalty and order in France. We have interfered to deliver her and Europe from anarchists and military adventurers. We drove the French out of Sicily, and restored it to the King of Naples. Our fleets girded the shores of Italy, and by that and other services we earned from the Pope the memorable declaration that George III. was the best of his subjects. We helped to drive the French out of Portugal and Spain. More recently, we have kept up a long course of interference in the affairs of the Peninsula,

and have helped materially to set up two constitutional queens. Russia, Austria, Prussia, and other smaller states, have to thank us for immense subsidies, and for other assistance, to which they are greatly indebted for the respectable figure they severally make on the map of Europe. We have interfered to give liberty and independence to Greece, and bless her with a court and a king. We have interfered to save Turkey from being utterly swallowed up by Mehemet Ali and his son, and have restored the Holy Land to the paternal dominion of the Porte. We have interfered, first, to give Belgium to the king of Holland, and then to take it away and make it independent. Indeed, it is difficult to say where we have not interfered, what government we have not thwarted or befriended, what people we have not backed up against their ruler, or what ruler we have not assisted against his subjects. But it is scarcely necessary to particularize interferences, seeing that nearly all our wars for the last sixty years have been wars of interference, viz., for the purely philanthropical object of establishing order and freedom in foreign countries, propagating constitutional ideas, adjusting the balance of power, and reforming mankind after the model of England.”*

This summary will enable us to judge how far England is prepared to join with us in engraving the proposed novelty upon Puffendorf and Vattel. When-

* Quoted in the *New York Observer*, of January 15th; a journal which has discussed this question, on the anti-Kossuth side, in a series of editorial articles written with much ability and candor.

ever she is ready to repudiate the whole course of her public policy, she will do it—and not till then. Meanwhile, she will continue to provide palaces for fugitive kings; and leave popular heroes, who may reach her shores in misfortune, to such comfort as they may gather from the cheers of the *people*, abated by the studied indifference of the crown, the aristocracy, the established clergy, and the cabinet.

Candor requires the acknowledgment that, in some of these cases of intervention, the British government has had our cordial approval. Not to specify doubtful examples, where is the American who did not heartily commend the joint intervention of the three allied powers in behalf of Greece? Had the new statute then been in force, the battle of Navarino had not been fought, and Greece must have fallen back under the iron rule of the Moslem. Nor is this all. If, in the face of this international compact, the allies had interfered, we and other nations must have intervened against them! We must have sided with the Turk against the Greek, with the Crescent against the Cross, with the tyrant against his victims.

Or, to come to a still more recent example, one of the first acts of the pseudo French republic of '48, was to issue a "Manifesto to Europe," full of inflated protestations about liberty, in which there occurred this passage: "If the independent States of Italy should be invaded; if limits or obstacles should be opposed to their internal changes; if there should be any armed interference with their right of allying

themselves together for the purpose of consolidating an Italian nation, the French republic would think itself entitled to take up arms in defence of those lawful movements for the improvement and the nationality of States." The next thing we hear, after this sublime flourish, Italy *is* "invaded," "limits and obstacles are opposed to her internal changes," an "armed interference" represses the will of her people, and a *French* army, storming the "Eternal City" amidst carnage and blood, subverts the infant republic, and reconstructs the throne of sacerdotal despotism. The infamy of this procedure has no archetype except in the blackest pages of European history. Sooner or later, retributive justice will avenge it upon that perfidious nation, if, indeed, they are not already reaping the fruit of it. Suppose, now, instead of the intervention of this mock-republic against the Roman people, England had interposed *for* them; that a British army had landed at Civita Vecchia, and protected the triumvirate in carrying into effect the expressed wishes of the nation for a change of government. What course would the new enactment have imposed upon the other nations, and ourselves as one of them? Why, that we should "intervene" to resist England. That we should espouse the cause of the priestly fugitive the Romans had, by common consent, deposed from his secular sovereignty, and replace in the Vatican that double-headed tyranny which has been the scourge of Christendom for the last twelve hundred years! Such would be the practical working of the

principle we are seriously asked to recognize, and even compel the rest of the world to recognize, as an essential provision of international law.

Without amplifying this point, the conclusions to which we are shut up are manifest. As a general proposition, the abstract right of every nation to manage its own affairs, must be admitted. Occasions may arise, however, to justify foreign intervention. The mere fact of intervention determines nothing as to its character; it may or may not be an infringement of international rights. In some cases, it supplies a just ground of war on the part of other nations. In other cases, it is so far from being a *casus belli*, that it imposes on other nations an obligation of gratitude to the "intervening" nation, as being eminently conducive to the interests of humanity and constitutional liberty. The rights and obligations involved in the matter are too diversified and intricate to be adjusted by sweeping, categorical canons. Cases must be disposed of as they arise, each on its own merits. Every cabinet must meet the question of right and the question of policy, on its own responsibility to God and the civilized world. Governments, too, must act on those common-sense principles which control individuals in analogous circumstances. No prudent man ties up his hands against all possible interference in the family quarrels of his neighbors; still less, pledges himself to fight other people if they interfere. As a general rule, interference would be wrong in morals, and practically mischievous. But if a man learned that his neighbor

was trying to murder his wife or children, he would be likely to interfere, and to get others to help him. Cabinets, that have not wedded themselves to an abstraction, will reserve a similar discretion, neither prejudging questions of intervention, nor hampering their freedom with self-imposed restrictions; since, "in truth, it is not the interfering or keeping aloof, but iniquitous intermeddlings, or treacherous inaction, which is praised or blamed by the decision of an equitable judge."^{*}

The importance of these principles will be apparent as we proceed. They may especially aid us in comparing the new doctrine with the past policy of our government.

When the Panama Mission was under discussion in the House of Representatives, in 1826, a distinguished gentleman[†] from this State, in the course of an able speech adverse to the appointment of an Envoy, said, in allusion to the President: "Knowing that the American people considered an adherence to the Farewell Address of the man who was first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen, to be the palladium of their safety, he has, by a long and ingenious argument, attempted to destroy its force." Without endorsing the censure upon the President expressed in this observation, it will recall to every mind what has happened in connection with the present excitement. At the very

* Burke: *On the Policy of the Allies.*

† Mr. Buchanan.

first banquet tendered him in this country, the Hungarian leader put forth all his powers in an ingenious argument to explain away the principles of the Farewell Address. He was too subtle an advocate and too shrewd a politician not to know that he could no more effect his object so long as Washington stood in his way, than an engineer can carry his rails through a granite barrier without tunnelling the rock. Whether it became him, an exile, invited to our shores by the generous hospitality of our Government, to set himself up, almost before the spray of the ocean was dry upon his clothes, as the expositor of that immortal instrument, and to undertake to instruct the American people in the true import of sentences which are among their household words, and written upon their heart of hearts—whether this was quite befitting to a man in his circumstances, is a point on which it might be thought there could be little difference of opinion. It is certain this was not the errand on which he was invited to this country. No administration, no Congress, would have sent a national ship to the Dardanelles to receive him, if it could have been anticipated that, from the moment of his landing on our shores, he would employ his extraordinary powers in subverting the influence of Washington, and bringing about a radical change in our foreign policy. We stood in need of no such ‘intervention,’ and no such teaching. If we do not comprehend the principles of Washington, at the end of a half century after his death, it is not probable we ever shall. Our

new preceptor seems to imagine that, like the Ethiopian treasurer who sat in his chariot and read the prophet Isaiah, we need a second Philip to help us “understand what we read;” and he has magnanimously volunteered his exegetical services. With what success, must be judged by those who have sifted and weighed the impassioned sophistries with which, on so many occasions, he has labored to show that General Washington not only was not against his scheme, but was actually in favor of it! Without examining his arguments in detail, let us once more listen to Washington’s own words. The Farewell Address is too familiar, to make it necessary that I should quote more than two or three sentences from it.

“The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have as little *political* connection with them as possible.” “Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence, she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.” “Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own, to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalship, interest,

humor, or caprice? It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world."

The same judicious and patriotic sentiments are everywhere expressed in his Correspondence.

"My ardent desire is, and my aim has been, so far as depended upon the Executive department, to comply strictly with all our engagements, foreign and domestic; but to keep the United States free from political connections with every other country, to see them independent of all, and under the influence of none. In a word, I want an *American* character, that the powers of Europe may be convinced we act for *ourselves*, and not for others. This, in my judgment, is the only way to be respected abroad, and happy at home; and not, by becoming the partisans of Great Britain or France, create dissensions, disturb the public tranquillity, and destroy, perhaps forever, the cement which binds the Union."*

"My policy has been, and will continue to be, while I have the honor to remain in the administration, to maintain friendly terms with, but be independent of, all the nations of the earth; to share in the broils of none; to fulfil our own engagements; to supply the wants and be carriers for them all; being thoroughly convinced that it is our policy and interest to do so."†

"No policy, in my opinion, can be more clearly demonstrated, than that we should do justice to all,

* Letter to Patrick Henry, Oct. 9, 1795.

† To Gouverneur Morris, Dec. 22, 1795.

and have no political connection with any of the European powers, beyond those which result from and serve to regulate our commerce with them. Our own experience, if it has not already had this effect, will soon convince us, that the idea of disinterested favors or friendship from any nation whatever is too novel to be calculated on, and there will always be found a wide difference between the words and actions of any of them.”*

“ It remains to be seen whether our country will stand upon independent ground, or be directed in its political concerns by any other nation. A little time will show who are its true friends, or, what is synonymous, who are true Americans ; those who are stimulating a foreign nation to unfriendly acts, repugnant to our rights and dignity, and advocating all its measures, or those whose only aim has been to maintain a strict neutrality, to keep the United States out of the vortex of European politics, and to preserve them in peace.”†
“ On the politics of Europe, I shall express no opinion, nor make any inquiry who is right or who is wrong. I wish well to all nations and to all men. My politics are plain and simple. I think every nation has a right to establish that form of government under which it conceives it may live most happy, provided it infracts no right, or is not dangerous to others ; and that no governments ought to interfere with the internal

* To William Heath, May 20, 1797.

† To Thomas Pinckney, May 28, 1797.

concerns of another, except for the security of what is due to themselves.”*

If these sentiments are not intelligible to the American people without an elaborate commentary, we are certainly below the average mental capacity of the human family. The simple truth is, Washington has expressed himself on this subject with such explicitness, such earnestness, such deep solemnity, even, that it requires a very high degree of assurance for any man to attempt to obscure or pervert the clear and emphatic import of his words.

The plea, that he enjoins “neutrality” merely as between belligerent nations, but “does not even recommend non-interference,”† is the subterfuge of an advocate, not the fair and manly construction of a candid inquirer after truth. If he does not, in the passages just quoted, recommend to his countrymen non-interference in the concerns of other nations, then that idea cannot be embodied in language. And besides, the argument is from the greater to the less. If he protests against interference where nations are at war, much more does he protest against the adoption of any rule by which we shall bind ourselves to interfere wherever one nation has seen fit to meddle with the affairs of another. In the former case, we should ordinarily have but one war on our hands at a time; in the latter, we should rarely, if ever, be out of war, and might easily have several wars to

* To General Lafayette, Dec. 25, 1798.

† Kossuth’s Speech at the Corporation Banquet in New York.

manage at once. For this notion of playing High Sheriff among the nations, however flattering to our vanity, would be found rather troublesome in the execution. There is no great extravagance in presuming that they might sometimes prove refractory ; and if they should, what would remain for us but cannon and bayonets ?—But for the gravity of the subject, it would be positively ludicrous to hear the name of Washington invoked as sanctioning a doctrine legitimately leading to results like these.

Allowing, however, that the country has correctly interpreted his counsels, they were only of “ temporary application.” His policy was very well for our childhood, but it should be consigned to the Museums now, with the old revolutionary guns and uniforms. We are “ too great a people” to isolate ourselves from the rest of the world, like the Japanese. Our voice should be heard, and our power felt, in adjusting the quarrels and shaping the destinies of the nations.

Such are the syren strains with which both foreign and domestic orators are essaying to emancipate us from the *servitude* imposed on us by the Founders of the Republic, and ratified by every administration from President Washington’s to President Fillmore’s. That the relations and duties of nations may change with their growth, no one will deny. But it is for the advocates of the new scheme to show that the policy prescribed by our fathers is not as well suited to our manhood as it was to our infancy. We are “a great nation :” not quite so great as some politicians

would have the people believe, but still, "a great nation." And what has made us one? An inflexible adherence, under God, to the principles we are now asked to discard. We are what we are, because "keeping out of the vortex of European politics,"* "avoiding all entangling alliances,"† and "abstaining from any intervention in the affairs of other governments, as contrary to our principles of national policy,"‡ we have minded our own business, taken care of our own interests, and applied ourselves, with an humble and grateful dependence on the Giver of all good, to the development and culture of those resources, physical, intellectual, and moral, which the munificence of the Creator has bestowed upon us with an unexampled prodigality. The auspicious results of this policy are before the world. They are the constant theme of our gratitude to God. They are no less the theme of eloquent eulogy with the Hungarian chief and his American coadjutors, who in one breath laud our present position to the skies, and in the next exhort us to quit the broad thoroughfare which has conducted us to it, for intricate and tangled by-paths which no nation ever yet attempted without being seriously damaged, if not ruined. If they expect us to heed their counsel, to sacrifice all our national traditions, and embark on the stormy sea of European politics, let them show some solid reasons for it. This inflated declamation about our grandeur

* Washington.

† Jefferson.

‡ Jackson.

and our prowess is nothing to the purpose, unless they can set aside the maxims of Washington and his successors respecting the principles which should control our foreign policy. Let them prove, if they can, that Europe has *ceased* to have her own “primary interests,” and her own “controversies,” and that, “in extending our commercial relations, therefore, we should have as little *political* connection with her as possible.” Let them show that, in virtue of our rapid advancement in the scale of nations, the time has come when we should “quit our own to stand upon foreign ground, and entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalship, interest, humor, or caprice.” In a word, let them demonstrate that it is not as much our wisdom and our duty now as it was in '95 and '98, to “keep the United States free from political connections with every other country;” to “maintain friendly terms with, but be independent of, all the nations of the earth; to share in the broils of none; to fulfil our own engagements; to supply the wants and be carriers for them all;” and not, by becoming the partisans of particular nations or cabinets, to “create dissensions, disturb the public tranquillity, and destroy, perhaps forever, the cement which binds the Union.” They have hitherto found it much easier to evade the real question at issue, than to show that these maxims were of mere temporary efficacy. Why, since the alternative has come to be, KOSSUTH or WASHINGTON, do they not grapple with the subject, and show that Washing-

ton's writings are only a horn-book for a people in leading-strings; and that, now we are out of the nursery, we must emulate the wisdom of the Hebrews, who, after Moses had led them safely across the sea, were for discarding him, to set up some extemporaneous captain of their own choosing? In the absence of any such frank and courageous dealing with the teachings of Washington, various considerations are brought forward in support of the new policy.

We have been admonished by the able and accomplished inventor of the scheme, that *self-preservation* requires our acceptance of it. The despots of Europe will not be satisfied with suppressing the free nationalities contiguous to them. Having effected this end, they will turn their attention to the United States. "And if (so he has told us) you do not take the position I humbly claim, you will have to fight a war single-handed, within less than five years, against Russia and all Europe."* "Remember—you will have to fight, surrounded by enemies, weakened by discord, standing forsaken, single-handed, alone, against *the whole world*."†

And so, in the same strain, "Professor Kinkel," at Louisville: If you suffer Germany to fall, "the united fleets of Europe will prevent your trade, and block up the ways of communication between our shores—no emigrant will be allowed to come to you to strengthen your power; and, if you will live, then you, a people

* At Pittsburg.

† At Cincinnati.

of twenty-four millions, will have to fight against two hundred millions of Europeans."

This is sufficiently startling, or would be, if either Kossuth or Kinkel bore the credentials of a prophet. It is not, however, without a parallel in our history. Precisely the same argument was used by Citizen Genet, the obnoxious Minister of the French Directory, in his incendiary efforts to embroil us in a war with England in '93. In a letter from Henry Lee to General Washington, written in June of that year, he says, in describing an interview with Genet: "He seemed to acquiesce in my reasoning, but insinuated that, in case the royal government was re-established in France, the kings of Europe would combine to destroy liberty here, and that our existence as a nation depended on the success of the Republican system (in France)." This prophecy shared the common fate of uninspired vaticinations. It remains to be seen whether a second edition of it will fare any better. Let the morrow take thought for the things of itself. We must look after the duties of to-day. It will be hard to convince a "calculating" people like our countrymen, that it is one of these duties to go to war with Russia, lest we may, at the end of a single lustrum, have to fight the whole world.

But the consideration which is pressed with the most vehemence, not only by our distinguished visitor, but at popular meetings and on the floor of Congress, is, that it does not become such a power as the United States to be indifferent to the struggles of

other nations laboring to achieve their independence. The charge implied in this language has already been repelled. It is simply untrue. It proceeds upon the assumption that there is only one method in which we can display our sympathy in the progress of liberty abroad, and that to decline the scheme of intervention, is equivalent to doing nothing.

It is difficult to believe that this is urged with sincerity; for there is not an intelligent boy amongst us, who does not know that the influence of our institutions is felt throughout the civilized world. Instead of doing nothing for the cause of freedom, we have done more during the present century than all other earthly agencies combined. The question now to be settled, is, whether we shall adhere to a policy which has been attended with such resplendent advantages to mankind, or launch forth upon a career of experiment which must imperil our own capacities of usefulness and obstruct the emancipation of other nations.

To some minds, that conservation of our own institutions, which has given us so rare a power to do good, seems quite too tame an object to engross the ambition of a "great republic." We have reached a point where we can safely bestow a moiety of the care hitherto demanded by our own affairs, upon the concerns of other nations. The exigencies of a mixed population of twenty-three millions, spread over twenty-one degrees of latitude, and fifty-four degrees of longitude, with every variety of climate and production, a maritime and inland frontier of several thou-

sand miles in extent, a commerce which whitens every sea, conflicting sectional jealousies, violent political contests, a most delicate combination of Federal and State relations, and accumulating masses of ignorance, lawlessness, and semi-barbarism, can all be provided for, and still leave us free to assume the protectorate of human rights and the executive of international law, for the rest of the world. Could national vanity or national infatuation go further? One hundred and fifty years ago, a classic poet of England celebrated *her* mission in these characteristic lines:—

“ ‘Tis Britain’s care to watch o’er Europe’s fate,
And hold in balance each contending State ;
To threaten bold presumptuous kings with war,
And answer her afflicted neighbor’s prayer.”

This is the identical mission which is now challenged for us; the only difference being that, instead of having it propounded in graceful poetry, it is commended to us in very thrilling prose. If we are ready to take the post, there is no fear but that England will resign it to us; for, when these verses were written, her public debt was sixteen millions of pounds sterling, and now it is about eight hundred millions. The greater part of this enormous sum has gone in carrying out her self-assumed vocation of maintaining the balance of power and redressing her neighbors’ grievances. It may be well to ponder these figures, before we offer to relieve her of her police-duties.

For, if we become the sponsors of the Kossuth principle, “ Intervention to prevent intervention,” how

is it possible to avoid war? He has himself conceded the point. In his address to the New York Bar, he spoke as follows:—

“ Yes, gentlemen, I confess, should Russia not respect such a declaration of your country, then you are obliged, literally obliged, to go to war, or else be prepared to be degraded before mankind from your dignity. Yes, I confess that would be the case. But you are powerful enough to defy any power on earth in a just cause, as your Washington said; so may God help me, as it is true, that never was there yet a more just cause. There was enough of war on the earth for ambition, or egotistical interests even for womanly whims, to give to humanity the glorious example of a great people going even to war, not for egotistical interest, but for justice of the law of nations, for the law of nature and of nature’s God, and it will be no great mischief after all. Protect them, defend them ever, if thou hast to go to war for it! That will be a holier war than ever yet was, and the blessing of God will be with thee. And yet, if the question of war is to be considered, not from the view of right, duty, and law, which still, in my opinion, is a decisive one; but, from the view of mere policy, then I believe that you must not shrink back from the mere word ‘ war.’ There is no harm in the mere empty word; three little letters, very innocent, that’s all!”

It is not for others to reconcile with this passage, the conviction he expressed in connection with it, that the course he recommended would *not* lead to a Rus-

sian war. None but a novice in political affairs can, for a moment, believe that we could attempt to enforce his doctrine, without going to war. It is preposterous to suppose that Russia or Austria, or any European State, would submit to dictation from us. And the advocates of the new dogma would manifest more respect for the intelligence of the country, by a candid admission of the truth on this point. Had Kossuth seen fit to pursue a different course, simply to plead the cause of his oppressed race, and solicit help for them, he would have had the whole country at his feet, and "material aid" would have flowed in upon him, not, as now, in driblets, but in a generous flood. But he sadly mistook his mission. Under a most mischievous bias, confirmed if not communicated by certain inflammatory speeches from Americans abroad, he came here, as a second Peter the Hermit, to preach up a crusade against all absolute governments, and against Russia in particular. He has traversed the country to get up a public sentiment which shall coerce the government into the adoption of his plans. He is exerting his utmost abilities to bring us into a position utterly alien from all our traditions, and which could not fail to supply the European powers with ample pretexts for intermeddling in our affairs. In a word, if he could succeed in his object, the actual result would be to convert us into a great military nation, with whatever that might entail of ambition, vice, faction, wars, suffering, public debt, financial disasters, and the endless train of calamities and

crimes inseparable from an aggressive policy. It is too much to expect that we should bear all this in silence. Neither the wrongs of Hungary, nor the duties of hospitality, forbid our protesting in the most emphatic terms against this ungrateful abuse of our kindness. When we want advice as to the management of our affairs, we will seek it; and we must reserve the right of choosing our counsellors. The indecency of this interference finds no mitigation either in the indulgence with which it has been treated, or in our past relations with Hungary. In the manner of it there is nothing to commend, everything to censure. The conduct of our foreign affairs belongs to the government, not to the people in mass meetings. If he had a diplomatic measure to propose, it was perfectly competent to him to submit it to the existing administration, and they must have disposed of it on their responsibility to God and the country. But, knowing that this would be fatal to his chimerical project, and presuming on the fertile resources of his oratory, he ignores the functions of the government, and brings his suit before an unauthorized and irresponsible tribunal. He has even gone so far on a recent occasion as to use language like this:—

“ My second reason for forming these associations, is, that *the cheers of the people are not recorded in Washington city*; but when I can show the records of these associations; when they have joined together and act in unison; when they consist of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people; when out of

the small drops of individual sympathy a vast ocean has been formed, then, indeed, though their cheers may not be weighed, their names and influence will be.”*²

I will not trust myself to comment on this extraordinary language, beyond a single observation. What must be the capacity of a nation for free institutions, the ostensible head of which can permit himself to prostitute the sympathy and confidence of a great people to the purpose of arraying that people against their government, and *that* on a most delicate and complex question originated by himself, and on his application *alone* demanding an answer? This question may do the Hungarians injustice, but it is impossible to repress the unwelcome apprehensions awakened by observing how ill their late governor seems to understand the reciprocal relations of a free government and its citizens.

It is, unhappily, true that numerous convocations have voted their adhesion to the new doctrine, and, in some instances, their desire to have our government enforce it at all hazards. It is this circumstance which gives the movement its importance, and justifies even the pulpit in resisting it. The Christian ministry is appointed to look after the interests of morality and religion. Nothing is so disastrous to these interests as war, and if we are ever called upon to co-operate with our fellow-citizens in averting this terrible calamity, we are warranted in doing it, when

* Speech at Salem, Ohio.

a zealous apostle of war is stealing the hearts of the nation, and working them up to a crusade, the folly of which has no parallel since Western Europe poured itself in a mighty avalanche upon Palestine for the recovery of the holy sepulchre. And there is the more reason why sober-minded men of all professions should frown upon this agitation, because there is so much material in the country which can by skilful management be made subservient to it.

It has, for example, even been used as an argument in favor of the scheme, that we have a very large body of foreigners amongst us who must feel a deep interest in the spread of liberal principles abroad. This reference is to the Germans, Poles, and others from continental Europe, many of whom have been driven here by political convulsions. Among them, unfortunately, there is a large sprinkling of the wildest radicals—demagogues in politics and atheists in religion.

It is said that there are about one hundred German newspapers in the United States, nearly all of which belong to the socialist school, and advocate the worst doctrines of the socialist creed. Some of these men, almost before they can speak our language, are plotting the subversion of the very institutions which have afforded them a refuge from oppression, possibly a shelter from the gallows. One of their associations in Richmond, a few months since, published a programme comprising the heads of “Reform” they mean to aim at. The following is a sample:—

“We demand the abolition of the presidency; the abolition of the senate, so that the legislature shall consist of only one branch; the right of the people to dismiss their representatives at their pleasure; all lawsuits to be conducted without expense; the abolition of all neutrality; intervention in favor of every people struggling for liberty; abolition of laws for the observance of the Sabbath; abolition of prayers in congress; abolition of oath upon the Bible; abolition of land monopoly; taking possession of the railroads by the state; abolition of the Christian system of punishment, and introduction of the human amelioration system; abolition of capital punishment.”

The association which put forth this platform “has its ramifications with similar societies in all parts of the Union, and they pledge themselves to work unitedly to accomplish these objects.”

It would be very unjust to the Hungarian leader to connect his name with these nefarious proceedings. In the speeches he delivered in England, he disclaimed all sympathy with socialism, politically or religiously, and is entitled to the full benefit of those disclaimers. But when we are urged to adopt his favorite principle respecting intervention, as an act of justice to the Europeans who live amongst us, it is quite pertinent to bring forward the disorganizing radicalism of these associations in bar of the argument. They reveal the remarkable fact that we have, in the very heart of our population, a disciplined band of *revolutionists*. We have been accustomed to think

that our system, whatever else might happen to it, was beyond the reach of revolution; that its fundamental principles, which are as little affected by the common agitations of party as the rocky bed of the ocean by the fluctuations of the waves, could never be called in question. But it seems, in the judgment of these alien anarchists, nothing is settled. The whole ship must be dismantled, her very hull broken up, and everything, from keel to royal-mast, rebuilt. This is what they modestly call “Reform,” but what, if it has its proper name, can only be styled Destruction. To reason with such men is, of course, not to be thought of. To entrust them with political power would be suicidal. They affiliate irresistibly with discontent and turbulence. Like the stormy-petrel, the tempest is their proper element. They hate our prudence in shunning foreign alliances. Everything that looks towards an interference with the affairs of Europe will have their staunch advocacy. They may not like the Hungarian’s character, but they will relish his project, and would relish it still more if they could infuse more radicalism into it. If we are not dragged into the first war that occurs across the water, it will not be their fault. Do we well to countenance a scheme which would find in men of this stamp its readiest supporters, and which they would be certain to use to our detriment and that of other nations?

Then, again, there is *the vainglorious spirit* which has diffused its vicious leaven through our whole national character, and which all politicians, foreign

and domestic, can play upon so skilfully. This is, by eminence, *the* lever which Kossuth has wielded with such signal effect, from his speech at Staten Island to his last speech in Ohio—nay, which he began to ply before he left England. It is the fuze he keeps always lighted; and whether he has before him the Bar or the populace, the women or the children, our grave legislators or still graver divines, he thrusts in the match, and is sure to find tinder. No people could be more conscious of the grandeur of their position than we are. True to our lineage, we never lapse into the weakness of disparaging our resources and achievements. What we have done is considerable, but it is nothing to what we can do and mean to do. Having subdued this continent, we are now, if we may trust our popular orators, to set about the regeneration of Europe. Europe, it is true, has felt our influence, and is feeling it through ten thousand unobtrusive channels. But these processes are too slow for this magnificent nineteenth century, and this still more magnificent country. We are called to more summary action. Twenty millions of American free-men are surely equal to two hundred and thirty millions of Europeans, and are bound to see that their sovereigns treat them well and help them on, as fast as possible, towards republican institutions. This is our mission. We have coasted along the shore long enough; a richer harvest than that which tempted Columbus invites us, and we must turn our prows to the ocean. Henceforth our government becomes a

grand *Collegium de propaganda libertate*, and we go on to our destiny as the renovators of the world!

Is it not humiliating that, with multitudes of our countrymen, badinage like this should be sober prose? Yet so it is: for it is precisely this material which forms the warp and woof of the most effective speeches, whenever our relations with the old world come under discussion. And it is the prevalence of this spirit, so capable of being wrought upon for evil, which should put the conservatism of the country upon an organized and resolute resistance to the visionary scheme we are combating.

The manifest absurdity of this scheme, and its ruinous tendency, in the naked form of “intervention to prevent intervention,” have led to the preparation of a substitute. It is proposed simply to notify the cabinets of the world, that we shall regard any interference by one nation in the domestic concerns of another, as a breach of international law—leaving it to be decided as cases arise, whether to follow this declaration by protest, by an appeal to arms, or by nothing at all.

This question I am not called upon to discuss. But there are two observations which may be made upon it. The first is, that nations cannot play at mock-fighting. In the lexicography of diplomatists, names are things. Protocols and protests do not necessarily involve more stringent measures. But a cabinet which is jealous of its dignity, will be chary

of its menaces. It is as dangerous for prime ministers as it is for children to play with edge-tools.

The other observation is, that all demonstrations of the kind referred to on the part of a great power, convey to oppressed nations an assurance of something more than naked sympathy. Their tendency is to encourage such nations to revolt. How far this may be proper in any given case, is not now the question. But common humanity, not to speak of justice, is outraged, when a cabinet stimulates a people to strike for their freedom, and then denies them the succors they had on fair moral grounds, if not by formal stipulation, been warranted to expect.

It is not denied, however, that cases may arise in which intervention in this form, and even with something more significant than parchment manifestoes, would be both our right and our duty. If the United States occupied the territory which constitutes the domain of Turkey, or that of Prussia, the very case which has occasioned the present crusade might have proved one of this description. The question then would have been, whether the law of self-protection did not require us to repel, by whatever means, the barbarous assault of Russia upon the liberties of Hungary. Situated as we *are*, our abstract right to interpose, should the same emergency occur a second time, may be conceded. But will any sane man contend that the possession of a right carries with it an obligation to the constant exercise of that right? Let this principle be adopted in the administration of our

foreign affairs; that, wherever we have the right, we are bound to interfere to prevent interference; and it needs no prophet to foretell that it would be to us “the great Serbonian bog betwixt Damiata and Mount Casius, where armies whole have sunk.” Besides, an abstract political right may be so exercised as to involve a moral wrong. Before we can be justified in arraigning another state for its misdeeds, a fair presumption must be made out, that the effort will do more good than harm. “The power inadequate to all other things, is often more than sufficient to do mischief.”* And the advocates of the scheme now before the country, will have to tax their ingenuity to show that any interference of ours between Hungary and Russia, would not turn out to be simply “a power to do mischief.” There are individuals among them—men not apt to be carried away by dreams and visions—who believe that this measure would be highly beneficial to Hungary. But even if this could be established, it would remain to be proved, that the ultimate consequences would not be most disastrous to ourselves, and to the general amelioration of mankind. It is too evident to admit of debate (the iteration of the sentiment may be excused), that we owe the elevated position we have attained among the nations, in no small measure, to the policy we have pursued with inflexible rigor, of standing aloof from their quarrels, and having as little political connection with them as possible. Is *this* a time to abandon a policy

* Burke.

which has, under God, consolidated our institutions, developed our resources, spread over our vast territory the symbols and appliances of peace and plenty, intelligence and virtue, poured into our lap the riches of every clime, secured us the respect of every people and cabinet, and made our name, not merely a talisman of hope, but a tower of strength, to the oppressed and the injured of all lands? When in answer to this, hereditary vanity or foreign adulation cites these very facts as a reason for repudiating the maxims of our fathers, does not history counsel us against listening to their seducing sophistries? Do not the moss-covered ruins of gorgeous cities and the mausoleums of empires, scattered all along the track of time, warn us with an eloquence surpassing all human oratory against exchanging the steady, vigilant care of our own interests, for an ambitious intermeddling in the concerns of other nations? That those nations are brought so much nearer to us than formerly, so far from strengthening the adverse argument, is an additional reason why we should not cultivate too great an intimacy with them. Just in proportion as the Atlantic is narrowed to a "ferry," shall we be swept towards that dangerous "vortex" of which Washington admonished us. The currents which bear us in that direction will steadily increase in volume and velocity. Setting aside the augmenting influence of commerce and travel, the annual transfer of three or four hundred thousand Europeans to our soil, will foster the disposition already too apparent here, to interfere in

the polities of that continent. Appeals for intervention are already multiplying. Before the ink was fairly dry which recorded in the official journals the reception of Kossuth by Congress, the honors paid him were urged before the Senate as a “precedent” for our “intervening” with another cabinet in a case of alleged oppression, and petitions were presented for an act of mediation with still a third sovereign, in behalf of certain of his aggrieved subjects. Once fairly inaugurated, this policy will mature as rapidly as Jonah’s gourd; though not, perhaps, to wither so soon. We shall need, if not a new department at Washington, at least a new bureau, to conduct our “Intervention account” with foreign governments; and those governments, not to be backward in reciprocating such favors, will see that our Congressional debates are enlivened by the frequent introduction of proposals to assist us in managing our private affairs. Possibly this system might *average* better results to the great family of nations. The Austrians, and the Chinese, and some others, might breathe more freely under a sovereignty shared by our President; but it is not quite so clear that *we* should be among the gainers. And as this is a point of some little moment to us, it may be well for our legislators to look into it before they adopt the new code.

The tone of these remarks may not accord with the exceeding gravity of the subject. For who can contemplate the *condition of Europe*, without shuddering to think of the consequences which must follow, if, at

such a crisis, we go forth under the impulse of a generous but illusive knight-errantry, to implicate ourselves in her conflicts? There is a graphic passage in one of Washington's letters,* so applicable to the present juncture, that it might seem to have been written for the occasion.

“With respect to the nations of Europe, their situation appears so awful, that nothing short of Omnipotence can predict the issue; although every human mind must feel for the miseries it endures. Our course is plain; they who run may read it. Theirs is so bewildered and dark, so entangled and embarrassed, and so obviously under the influence of intrigue, that one would suppose, if anything could open the eyes of our misled citizens, that the deplorable situation of those people could not fail to effect it.”

What is their condition now but that of a boiling caldron? There is no one sentiment in which men of all ranks and professions, of all creeds and parties, on both sides of the Atlantic, are more thoroughly agreed, than that Europe is on the eve of a general war. This is one of the favorite common-places of the Magyar. He dilates upon it in every speech. He depicts it prophetically as the grand contest which is to decide the fate of the nations. He declares that the struggle has already begun, in the late usurpation in France; and professes to be expecting letters by every steamer, recalling him to take his proper post in conducting it. And yet, in the same breath in which he

* To Oliver Wolcott, May 29, 1797.

delineates the terrific scenes of this exterminating war, he calls upon us, "raising our gigantic arm in a commanding attitude, to speak these words to the Russian Bear, 'KEEP BACK!' and to the Czar, 'HANDS OFF!'"* Does the man think we are demented? Can he imagine that the cheers which these inflammatory appeals elicit from masses crazed by the sorcery of his eloquence, indicate the sober convictions of the people of the United States? Does his familiarity with history supply him with a solitary example of national folly and insanity at all comparable to that which this nation would present, should we accede to his counsel? Or can he cite a single other instance in which an expatriated stranger, the guest of a great and prosperous people, has presumed to offer himself to that people as the expositor of their foreign policy, in place of one who had earned, by every tie which wisdom, virtue, patriotism, magnanimity, and a long life of disinterested and arduous service in the field and the cabinet could confer, a title to that most venerable name, the "FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY?"

And with what view, after all, are we asked to commit our bark, freighted as it is with the best hopes of humanity, to this treacherous sea, at the moment when earth and heaven are blackening and quaking with the approaching hurricane? Why, since the storm *must* come, and a whole continent is to reel under its Titanic convulsions, and so many ancient and massive structures are to be shattered to pieces,

* Speech in Baltimore.

why should *we*, of deliberation and choice, rush into the turmoil and invite its fury? The only reply to these questions, is the following : “ The freedom of the nations is confided to your custody, and fidelity to your trust demands of you this sacrifice.” The answer is worthy of the reasoning which suggests it; most unworthy of the sacred cause it is designed to subserve. Not to note the subtle appeal it makes to our vanity, it proceeds upon the pernicious fallacy, that mere political liberty—the enfranchisement of the masses and an equality of civil rights—comprises all the elements of national stability and happiness; and hence, that republican institutions can be propagated by diplomacy or the sword. A more Utopian heresy in politics was never propounded. It has its ecclesiastical prototype in the scheme of those zealous princes of the seventh and eighth centuries, who put themselves at the head of their regiments and dragooned whole tribes of savages into the Church. Treading in the steps of these warlike evangelists, there is a modern school of political reformers, whose prime conception of freedom, is, that it consists in democratic charters and usages; and that, wherever these can be established, a nation is put on the high road to prosperity and renown. As reasonable to argue that the true way to insure order in our public schools, would be to convert them into pure democracies by deposing all the teachers and remitting their functions to the *posse comitatus*. Nay, this is doing our boys injustice.

For if there is a single school in which the pupils would not display more capacity for self-government than the French nation has done since the bloody epoch of '93, the Board of Controllers should know the reason. To go back but a very short time, four years ago to a month (as the speaker can testify from personal observation) "Liberty-trees" were planted in Paris, and the other chief towns of the new-born "Republic," amidst the paeans of the populace and with sacerdotal benisons. But they would not grow. After the buds which were on them died, which they did very soon, not one of them ever sprouted. And within the last two months, for aught that appears to the contrary, amidst the shouts of the same populace, and with the benedictions of the same priests, they have been chopped down and made into bonfires. It was an idle experiment, on a par with the most absurd of those which are recorded of amateur cultivators. You might as well plant the palmetto in Iceland, or the Victoria Regia in the heart of Sahara, as "Liberty-trees" in a soil which has never been broken up and mixed with the rich mould of Gospel-truth. The tree of life was in the beginning placed side by side with the tree of knowledge: and social reformers should have learned before now, that what "God thus joined together, man may not put asunder." In our soil, they never have been "put asunder." From the first settlement of the continent to the present hour, we have gone upon the principle, that an ignorant or a vicious people cannot be a free people.

Nor was it in this alone that the preparation of the North American colonists, for liberty, consisted. They were no strangers either to the science of government or to the exercise of civil franchises. Their protracted conflicts with the crown, and the peculiar exigencies growing out of their separation into isolated communities, each of which had to manage its own affairs, had made them thoroughly conversant with the principles of just administration. They came out of the revolutionary war, therefore, trained to enjoy and improve the independence their valor had won.

So also in England, the work of reform has been gradual but progressive. From the memorable day on which the barons wrested Magna Charta from the perfidious John at Runnymede until now, the popular element has been, on the whole, and with many temporary reverses, gaining strength. Power is always sensitive and tenacious; and history presents no finer study than the sublime contest which has been going on in that country for several centuries, and of late with increased energy, between prerogative and freedom—the crown and the aristocracy on the one hand, and the people on the other. Nature supplies an apt illustration of it, in the dash of the ocean against a majestic cliff—assailing it from year to year with the steady flux and reflux of the tide—now lashing it with storms—and ever and anon gathering up its mighty surges, and discharging them upon it with a fury which makes it quiver to its topmost pinnacle.

Particle by particle, crag by crag, the granite barrier succumbs, and buries itself in the bosom of the waters. And step by step—never without resistance—sometimes from conviction—often from policy—and still oftener from fear—but still, step by step, power in Great Britain has bowed to right; prerogative has put off its purple, and come down reluctantly from its throne, and diffused itself among the people. Earnest patriots cannot brook this process. It is too tedious. They would have everything at once. But Providence is wiser and kinder than they. For the result has been, that in England the wheel of reform never goes backward. Obliged to contest every inch of ground, the people come to understand and to value their rights; and when they get them, they know what to do with them. Their progress, though moderate, is sure. If they are strangers to the ecstasy their mercurial neighbors have sometimes felt in celebrating the apotheosis of Liberty, they are no less strangers to their despondency and terror, on seeing their adored idol trampled to death in a night by a mob, or *garotted* by a military usurper.

It may not be necessary to fortify the position I am maintaining, by further examples; but there are facts of a very recent date bearing on this point, too instructive to be omitted. If these facts prove anything, it is that the populations of the continent are as yet without that training which would make *our* freedom a blessing to them—that if we could, within

three months, reduplicate our institutions all over Europe, in place of the existing monarchies, it would require a standing army as large as our aggregate body of militia to keep them a-going for five years. The year 1848, the most remarkable and pregnant year in the chronicles of the other hemisphere for three centuries, witnessed a general movement throughout Europe towards the establishment of liberal institutions. In France, the monarchy was thrown down by a single popular outbreak, and a republic reared upon its ruins. In Sicily, a constitution was promised, though not actually framed, by the most savage tyrant who disgraces a throne in Christendom. An insurrection in Munich coerced a profligate king to abdicate his crown. Another in Berlin extorted from the capricious and incomprehensible king of Prussia most explicit stipulations touching the charter his subjects demanded, and which he had violated his oath by withholding. The minor German States adopted decisive measures for reconstructing their long-lost unity and nationality. The Austrians were driven out of Milan, and a provisional government established in Lombardy. Even Vienna was surrendered to the people, and a constitution wrung from the reluctant and autocratic emperor. While, in Italy, the phenomenon was presented of a Pope, the professed friend of popular rights and an avowed advocate of progress. It was here, indeed, this grand movement commenced. The way had been preparing under the pontificate of

Gregory XVI. The only nation blessed with an infallible ruler, was ruled so badly that their grievances had become intolerable; and it was for Pius IX., on his accession to the tiara, to choose between identifying himself with the mass of his people, and mitigating their burdens, or putting himself at the head of the Jesuit party, with the certainty of encountering a revolution. He decided for the former—not exclusively, we must believe, from motives of policy, but in obedience to the instincts of a heart not a stranger to humane and benevolent sentiments. He saw, for who in Italy could help seeing, that the people were ground down under insufferable oppressions; and he resolved to ameliorate their condition. Addressing himself with energy to the Augean task of removing abuses, he set about reducing the taxes, abolishing arbitrary imprisonments, regulating the administration of the finances, and promoting popular education. He granted amnesties to political offenders; announced his determination to found a representative government; and invited a congress of influential laymen from the different States of the Church to assist him in arranging the details of a constitution. The Italians were in an ecstasy. The despots of Europe in a frenzy. The people everywhere clamorous in their applause of the new Pontiff, and no-where more so than among ourselves. Enormous mass meetings were held in our cities, at which laudatory addresses to *Pio Nono* were adopted, and Protestants and

Romanists vied with each other in celebrating the magnanimity of the “greatest Reformer of the age.”

And what has been the issue of all these auspicious demonstrations? What the meridian of the day which dawned so brightly upon Europe, and gave promise of a universal regeneration from the German Ocean to the Mediterranean—from the Straits of Dover to the Dardanelles? In the language of the North British Review, with “scarcely an exception, everything has fallen back into its old condition. In nearly every state the old demon of despotism has returned, bringing with it worse devils than itself. Hungary and Hesse are crushed; Bavaria has been degraded into the brutal tool of a more brutal tyrant; the Prussian people are sullen, desponding, and disarmed, and the Prussian government sunk into a terrible abyss of degradation; Austria has a new emperor, more insolently despotic than any of his predecessors for many a long year; and throughout Germany constitutional liberty has been effectually trampled out. In Italy, Venice and Lombardy have been reconquered, and are now experiencing the *vae victis*; Tuscany is worse because more Austrian than before, and alarmed at the peril she has incurred; the small duchies are as bad as ever—they could not be worse; the Pope, terrified out of his benevolence and his patriotism, having fled from the Vatican in disgrace, has been restored by foreign arms, and the old ecclesiastical abominations are reinstated in their old supremacy;

while Naples and Sicily are again prostrate at the feet of the most imbecile and brutal of the incurable race of Bourbons. Two short years have passed away since Europe presented to the lover of liberty and human progress the most smiling aspect it had ever worn: and in this brief space of time, an inexorable destiny has gathered together all the far-reaching anticipations, all the noble prospects, all the rapid conquests, all the rich achievements of that memorable era, and covered them over with these two narrow words—*Hic jacet!*”

Why are these melancholy events cited? Not, certainly, to upbraid the patriots of the old world; nor to abate the indignation against their oppressors, which must inflame every generous bosom. But they are adduced to refute for the ten thousandth time, the absurd theories so prevalent in Europe, and so often propounded even here, respecting the necessary conditions of national freedom. If there are no journals now, which carry the heading attached to that of Camille Desmoulins: “There is no victim more agreeable to the gods than an immolated king,” and no orators to maintain, that “the rights of the people can be written only in the blood of kings,” it must not be supposed that this creed has become obsolete. It has its devotees, its shrines, its *propaganda*, and its purposes; and will have, so long as there are tyrants among princes, or anarchists among their subjects. And far more numerous, more respectable, and more influential than

this band of regicides, is that heterogeneous body of patriots, comprising all faiths and languages, who insist that any nation can provide for itself which has the reins put into its own hands. These are the parties to be instructed, if that were possible, by the retrospect we have just taken, and by the facts drawn from our annals and those of England. Without pretending to specify the various causes which occasioned the disastrous results of the late European struggle, is not the incompetency of the revolutionists to turn the crisis to any hopeful account, too palpable to admit of a question? Is it not apparent, from the whole course of events between the banishment of Louis Philippe and the restoration of Pius IX., that the masses are not yet fitted for complete emancipation? In Robespierre's last speech before that Convention whose appetites he had so whetted with blood that they were now thirsting for his own, a speech of which Sir Walter Scott says, "it was as menacing as the first distant rustle of the hurricane, and dark and lurid as the eclipse which announces its approach," he observed: "Do not let us deceive ourselves: to found an immense republic upon the basis of reason and equality, to unite in a strong band all the parties of this immense empire, is not an enterprise which vanity can consummate: it is the master-piece of virtue and human reason. Every faction grows from the bosom of a great revolution—how suppress them, if you do not submit all their passions to justice? You have not

any other guarantee of liberty than the vigorous observance of the principles of the universal morality which you have proclaimed. What signifies to us the conquest of kings, if we are vanquished by the vices which bring forth tyranny?"* Unhappily for himself and for France, he woke up to the grandeur and difficulty of the task his associates and himself had undertaken, only after the axe was suspended for his head, which had struck down so many of his victims. Too late did he discover, that a liberal constitution could not be kept alive in an atmosphere feculent with vice and drugged with atheism. But it is something to be able to cite just and weighty sentiments like these, from the lips of the great high-priest of Jacobinism. If the patriots who imagine that a country can be made free simply by driving the wheel of revolution through it, will not hear Robespierre speaking as from the scaffold, "neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

But the argument supplied by our history and institutions, is far more comprehensive. The great thing we have done for the world, has been, under Providence, *to establish and maintain a just, wise, and well-ordered government*—in all essential particulars, a "model" of what a government should be. This was what Europe needed: not elaborate disquisitions on the rights of man; still less, a tumultuous crusade to replace her despotisms with republican charters; but

* Lamartine's Girondists.

the steady, successful working, on a sufficiently extended scale, of a polity comprising the fundamental principles of true civil liberty—a system embracing the alleged incompatible elements of independence and stability; the supremacy of law and popular freedom; the unfettered exertion of personal aspirations in any and all departments of society, with the maintenance of order and the protection of private and public rights. In meeting this demand, we have rendered the old world an invaluable service, even in the way of elucidating abstract principles. France, Germany, Italy, all may learn here, if they will, why we have succeeded, and they have not; and how hopeless it is for them to expect to reach our ends, if they scoff at our means. This Republic is a standing refutation of their crude theories about human rights and social progress, the spawn of the miserable ignorance and impiety which reign among them. It pours contempt on the wretched quackery which, in a thousand forms, essays to cure their maladies without the aid of the BIBLE, or any recognition of the God of the Bible. It is a demonstration which no sagacity can subvert and no artifice elude, that “religion is the only basis on which the broad development of freedom can rest;”* that the only adequate buttresses of free institutions are intelligence and virtue; and that, to make a people virtuous and intelligent, you must give them, not treatises on Communism and Pantheism, not infi-

* Kossuth to the New York Clergy.

del commentaries on the Scriptures, not monkish legends and cathedral pantomimes, but the GOSPEL OF CHRIST. This has made us what we are; and this alone can make them what they ought to be. There are minds all over Europe beginning to perceive this, and to understand that the first step towards assimilating their institutions to ours, must be to secure for themselves an open Bible and a pure faith. Should a merciful Providence concede to them these priceless gifts, the political regeneration of Europe, with all other needful blessings, would soon follow in their train.

In opposition, then, to all the schemes devised or to be devised for embroiling us in the disputes of the other continent, we maintain that the best thing we can do for the world, the only method in which we can fulfil the beneficent mission confided to us, is, to preserve this UNION inviolate. We hold it, let it be remembered, not for our own interest or honor merely, but as Trustees for mankind. It is ours to administer, but not to dispose of; ours to enjoy and to transmit, but not ours to destroy. We have no more right to destroy it, than we should have, if such a thing were possible, to blot the sun out of the firmament. For the entire race have a stake in this government. "Wherever you go, you find the United States held up as an example by the advocates of freedom. The mariner no more looks to his compass or takes his departure by the sun, than does the lover

of liberty abroad shape his course by reference to the Constitution of the United States.”*

The recent course of events, in either hemisphere has increased both the importance and the difficulty of the task thus devolved on us. Fresh causes of alienation, now happily repressed for a season, have sprung up among ourselves; and the disasters which have attended the popular movements abroad, are enlarging our domestic burdens and threatening to complicate our foreign relations. If, in the infancy of this country, Europe could regard us with comparative indifference, all indifference has vanished before our early and vigorous manhood. The name of the “United States” is mixed up with the intricate web of European Diplomacy; it gleams out in their state-papers; it is a watchword in every popular insurrection. Cabinets no longer ignore the question: “What course will the Government at Washington adopt?” The friends of liberty in every kingdom appeal to us to aid them in their projects, and these appeals are certain to be pressed by a large and powerful portion of our own population. It will be well if, in these critical circumstances, the present generation are content to tread in the steps of WASHINGTON; if, instead of plunging into the wars of Europe, we display our sympathy for liberty there by measures which will in the end do far more to promote it. Let us foster the growth of liberal principles among those nations, by

* Mr. Webster.

all such diplomatic arrangements as we can adopt without compromising our settled policy of non-intervention. Let our countrymen prosecute the benevolent work of supplying them with the word of God; for they will never have rational and permanent liberty until they get the BIBLE. Let us educate and Christianize the masses they send to us, who not only act upon us for good or evil, but re-act with energy upon the countries they have left. And let us TAKE CARE OF OUR UNION; for this, in respect to constitutional liberty, is the last hope of Europe and of the world. A legion of adverse evils is arrayed against it. Ignorance, immorality, ambition, fanaticism, faction, lawlessness, sectional animosities, to which, with the condition of the other continent before us, may well be added, atheism, and the insidious, grasping spirit of the Papal Hierarchy—all are hostile to the Union, and must be met and vanquished if we would preserve it. With God's help, they can be vanquished. We have intelligence, talent, piety, and patriotism enough left to do this or anything else which may require to be done for the sake of our beloved country. Let all who really love the country, and desire to see the Union transmitted in its glorious integrity to our children, discharge their duty. Let the people be educated; the Bible lodged in every house; the Gospel everywhere preached; the Sabbath and its ordinances honored; wise and upright men selected as our rulers; the laws faithfully executed; God's universal provi-

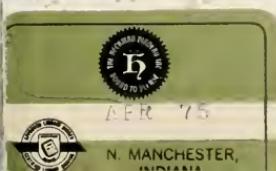
dence acknowledged, and his protection continually invoked throughout our borders—and we may confidently expect the perpetuity of our institutions. We may look forward without presumption to a future as brilliant as our past career has been illustrious. We shall consummate with honor the sublime mission confided to us for mankind, and achieve a yet more signal fulfilment of the prophecy, “ALL NATIONS SHALL CALL YOU BLESSED!”

THE END.

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